



The President's Daily Brief

25 February 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

25 February 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Communist forces are resisting the South Vietnamese operations in Laos with shellings and ground attacks, but there have been no new large engagements.
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The petroleum crisis in Phnom Penh has eased.
(Page 2)

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Moscow views China's UN membership as inevitable but perhaps delayed because of the Taiwan ejection issue.
(Page 5)

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The Japanese resolve to go easy in trying to improve their relations with China. (Page 6)

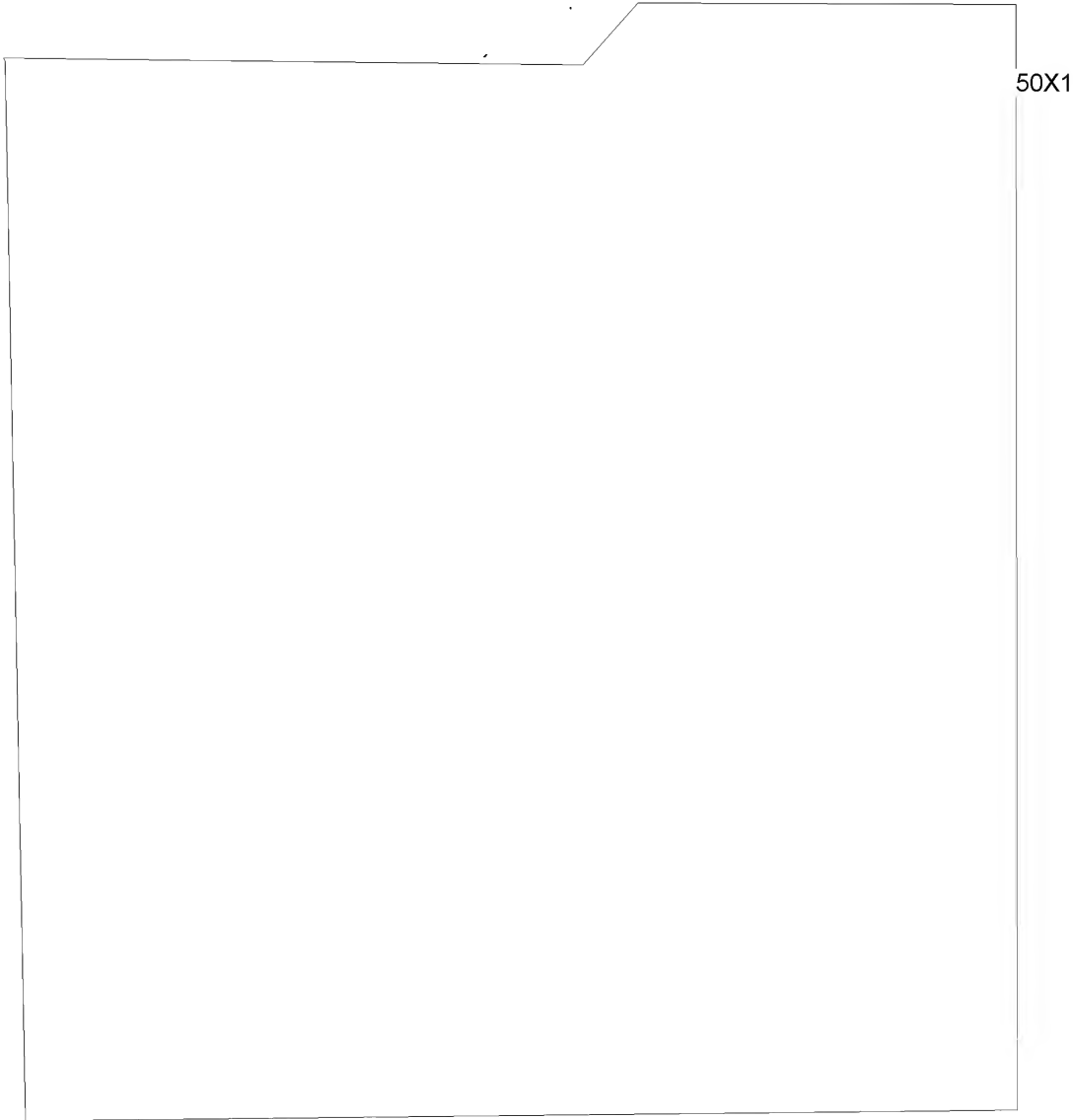
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VIETNAM-LAOS

Communist forces are resisting the allied operations in Laos with shellings and some ground attacks, but there have been no new large engagements.

The account of a North Vietnamese defector suggests that the Communists intend to commit still more units to resist the South Vietnamese push into Laos.

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As of 22 February, the Communists apparently were still moving substantial quantities of supplies through the area southeast of Tchepone.

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there was some decline in truck traffic on 22 February from the high levels of the past few weeks. South Vietnamese forces operating in the vicinity of Muong Nong probably caused some of the decline, but the North Vietnamese have many bypasses and alternate routes in this area and only part of the system has been affected.

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CAMBODIA

Recent deliveries of about 18,000 metric tons of petroleum supplies to Phnom Penh from South Vietnam via the Mekong River have eased the oil crisis. Petroleum has also reached Phnom Penh by truck over Route 4 from the refinery at Kompong Som, as well as overland from Saigon and Bangkok. Land shipments, however, have amounted to less than a thousand metric tons of petroleum since last December, due to the continuing insecurity of key highways. As an alternative to the use of Route 4, the Cambodians are planning in the near future to start regular petroleum deliveries by water from Kompong Som to Phnom Penh in small, recently chartered tankers.

There are now enough stocks in the city's petroleum depots to meet essential military and civilian requirements for at least three weeks. The petroleum situation will remain difficult, however. The Cambodians have not as yet followed through on plans to purchase petroleum transport vessels of their own. Their Mekong supply route is maintained by foreign vessels and crews, which could suddenly abandon this service if the Communists increase the dangers. The hazards of the Mekong passage were emphasized again on 22 February, when enemy fire struck six of nine commercial vessels in a convoy, sinking one.

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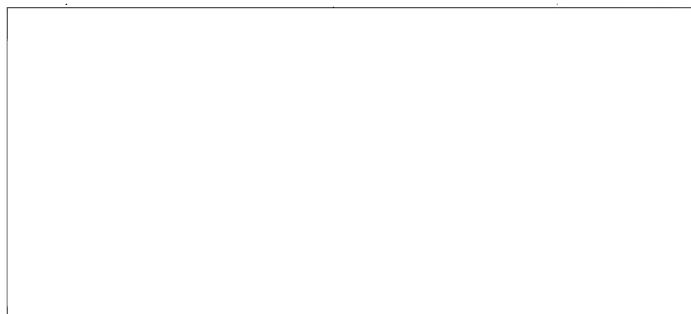
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USSR-CHINA-UN

The Soviet Foreign Ministry's chief China watcher, Mikhail Kapitsa, told Ambassador Beam on 23 February that Soviet officials believe China is definitely interested in UN membership. Kapitsa pointedly noted, however, that he was "absolutely convinced" Peking will not abandon its demand that Taiwan be ejected from all UN organs as a condition of Peking's membership. A Soviet UN diplomat took a similar line with a US official on 22 February.

Moscow evidently views China's UN admission as inevitable but may be hoping that Western resistance to Taiwan's expulsion will delay Peking's admission. Despite its public support, Moscow remains unhappy with the prospect of Peking's presence in the UN, fearing the Chinese will use it as a forum for voicing anti-Soviet policies and for undercutting Soviet appeal to the Third World. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the Soviets will risk upsetting their somewhat improved relations with Peking by becoming openly identified with efforts to delay its admission.

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JAPAN - COMMUNIST CHINA

Foreign Minister Aichi told the US ambassador on 23 February that protecting Nationalist China's position in the UN would be a "prime objective" of Japanese policy. Although the Japanese still hope for improved bilateral relations, Aichi said they will not be "intimidated" by Peking. Aichi talked of the need for the Japanese and US governments to keep in step on the China issue. He added that Tokyo was in no hurry to reach final decisions on strategy before this summer, implying that opposition pressure in the Diet had been less than anticipated.

Tokyo appears to have concluded that a conciliatory approach toward the China problem would be unproductive because of Peking's hostility toward the Sato government. For the present, at least, the Sato government will probably continue to support Taipei's diplomatic position while making sounds about improving relations with Peking. Such strategy would be intended to keep domestic political pressures in check.

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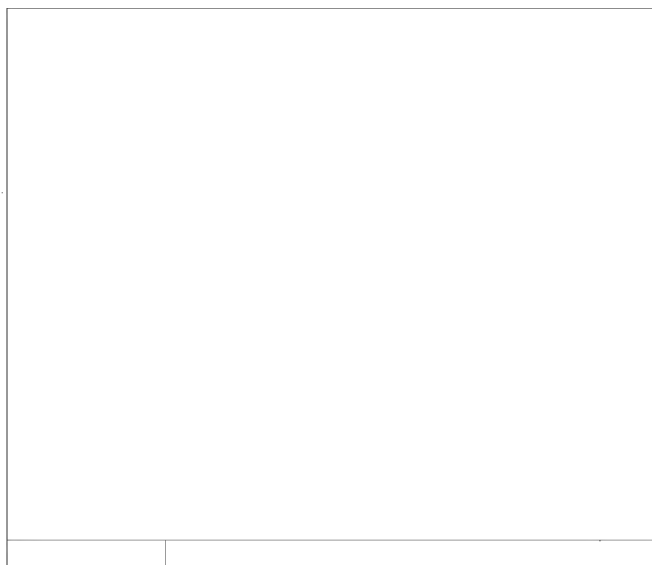
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